



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

OUR THREEFOLD NEEDS

By E. C. HILLS

IN THE MODERN LANGUAGE JOURNAL of October, 1919, there was an article entitled "Has the War Proved that Our Methods of Teaching Modern Languages in the Colleges Are Wrong?—A Symposium." This article has caused considerable discussion, and as one result several distinguished Romance scholars were asked to add their views to those already given. The statements that have been received are given below:

"Modern language teaching in this country is in need of reform because the results obtained at present do not justify the effort expended or correspond to the importance of the subject. It seems to me that changes should be made along the following lines:

"(1) Teachers should have a better oral command of the language and at least a practical knowledge of phonetics.

"(2) Elementary classes should meet at least five times a week and the number of students should be limited to twenty.

"(3) At the end of each year (or of each semester where practicable) the best students should be placed in special sections where rapid progress would be made.

"(4) By insisting upon a speaking command of the foreign language on the part of graduate students, universities should call attention to its importance for the appreciation of literature and for the study of linguistics.

"What we need most of all, however, is a change in the attitude of faculties and students towards the study of modern languages which should bring about full recognition of its dignity and value, and of the great rôle it is destined to play in the curricula of the future."

PROFESSOR EARLE B. BABCOCK,
New York University

"What we need in modern language instruction is to get back to a solid foundation of systematic study, and away from 'reforms' and 'isms.' My talks with ex-service men have convinced me that what they needed most was drill in verbs, pronouns, and again *verbs*: tenses, moods, and verbal idioms. As one boy put it: 'I could look up nouns in my little dictionary, and the *War French* books gave lots of useful expressions, but to use verbs you've got

to know 'em.' A paragraph from my recent article on Spanish teaching in the *Journal of Education* expresses my attitude:

"Something has been said about various means of making the study of Spanish attractive to students, creating a Spanish atmosphere, utilizing games, plays, songs, appealing to the competitive sense, etc. It must be borne in mind, however, that such activity, no matter how ingeniously conceived, is never a substitute for good, hard work in learning the language. The sugar-coating makes the pill palatable, but it is the drug within that effects the cure, and if time presses we must needs take the medicine without the coating. No matter what 'perfectly lovely' times the teacher gives the class, if he does not make them *learn*, he is a failure as a teacher.'"

PROFESSOR HENRY GRATTAN DOYLE,
George Washington University

"Educational work is too poorly paid. The best minds do not always enter the field. Unless an ordinary instructor in our colleges can be paid about \$2500 to start we shall continue to have our college classes in the freshman and sophomore years taught by so-called graduate students. . . . In Spanish, another reform that is very imperative is the establishment of separate Spanish Departments with Spanish teachers as heads. As long as Spanish is an adjunct to French or German it will be poorly taught. . . . In most of our colleges and universities Romance departments are French departments. A glance at the Catalogue shows that Spanish and Italian receive little attention. A Spanish scholar and teacher should not have charge of a French department, and a French scholar and teacher should not have charge of a Spanish department.

"As for French and Spanish I believe they should be taught as living languages. For the first and second year classes native instructors should be obtained or American teachers who have a perfect command of the spoken language. The statement so frequently made that those who have a perfect command of French and Spanish, being as a rule, Frenchmen or Spaniards, cannot teach is the height of absurdity. Such statements are a confession of incapacity. The modern language teacher who merely translates into English because he cannot himself speak the foreign tongue is the one who spreads the legend that those who do speak the foreign tongue cannot teach."

PROFESSOR AURELIO M. ESPINOSA,
Leland Stanford Junior University

"As a rule nearly all who take up a foreign language desire to learn to speak it at short notice. . . . Those who are very familiar with foreign languages are well aware that these are not *learned*, they are *lived*—and one must be a long time living with them.

"Granted, for the moment, that the feat of learning to speak a foreign language in our classes in three or four years were possible, what then? From that very moment of perfect attainment, unless the student had the most unusual facilities for keeping up the language, he would immediately proceed to forget it. . . . As most of our University Extension classes here in Boston desire to hear the language spoken and strive themselves to attain some facility along those lines, naturally on my side, I strive to give them what they want. I use quite a number of Direct Method textbooks.

"The publishers are calling for these texts with which to teach *the spoken languages*, and today the teacher who can use these texts effectively is likely to meet with a cordial response from the many who desire to learn to speak 'at short notice,' and who are never likely to realize that such a result, in the nature of the case, is an impossibility."

PROFESSOR JAMES GEDDES, JR.,
Boston University

"The war has revealed to several millions of our young people (who have carried the news far and wide) that there are actually men and women living on the other side of the Atlantic; that the French, for instance, are an extant race, with speech, habits, and ideas strangely like and strangely unlike our own.

"It is for us to utilize the interest born of this new sense of reality, to keep vivid the image of the people behind the language and the literature, to develop the idea of human kinship and human differences."

PROFESSOR C. H. GRANDGENT,
Harvard University

"If the war has taught us any lesson with regard to the teaching of modern languages it is the futility of attempting to teach our students to speak a foreign language in two or three years of work in secondary school or in college.

"It is constantly being remarked that the European schoolboy learns to speak his foreign languages. But it must not be overlooked that the two chief factors in this achievement are: the European boy begins the study of foreign languages when he is eleven or twelve years old, when lingual training is easy; and he continues that study for six or eight years. If through the agency of the junior high school we can provide those two factors in our American schools, we may hope to attain results comparable with those of other countries.

"In the meantime, we must honestly accept the truth and admit that we cannot hope to teach students to speak another language in the few hundred hours of a school course.

"There still remain, however, certain things which we can hope to teach in our limited course. These are: the principles of grammar, translation, composition, pronunciation, and finally the ability to understand the spoken language.

"I cannot agree with Professor Ford in his statement that 'no small proportion of our students are linguistic morons,' unless he is willing to go with me a step farther and say that 'no small proportion of all our college students are mental morons.' . . . My experience has been that the students who fail in modern language courses are the students who fail in other courses; they are not 'linguistically' unfit, they are 'mentally' unfit.

"At Cornell we require three years of elementary work before a student is admitted to a course in conversation or a course in literature.

"I only hope that we shall not be lured into undertaking the impossible by the ill-advised and ill-founded pronouncements of theorists."

PROFESSOR HAYWARD KENISTON,
Cornell University

"We learned from the war little that was new in regard to language teaching. The defects in our methods and results are due chiefly to unfavorable conditions, such as lack of sufficient time, size of classes, inadequate training of teachers, and total lack of language-sense on the part of many pupils.

"Reform should consist in improving such conditions. The present clamor for conversational fluency should not blind us to the necessity of mastering the grammar and learning to appreciate the literature. We should insist on the importance to the nation as well as to the individual of having foreign languages thoroughly taught in secondary schools, and of having sufficient time assigned for the purpose."

PROFESSOR KENNETH MCKENZIE,
University of Illinois

"I believe that better results in language instruction are not to be gained by any radical change in aim and method but by the gradual removal of the handicaps of excessively large classes and insufficient time, by the more general adoption of the sabbatical leave (a mythical institution for most of us), and by holding in check the radical reformers.

"In the first year of language work our aim should be to help the student lay a solid foundation of grammatical knowledge and arouse in him, through the use of material that will give him some acquaintance with the racial character of the people whose language he is studying, the permanent interest that will impel him to

build upon this foundation according to his individual needs or desires.

"In the reaction that has taken place from the antiquated 'grammar-translation' method, the fanatical application of the so-called 'direct method' would be just as harmful to the real purpose of language instruction in colleges and universities.

"There can be little differentiation in the instruction given students during the first year in college and the first two years in high school. After the fundamentals of grammar and a basic vocabulary have been acquired through careful grammar study, much oral practice, reading, and even some translation into English, the student should then have the opportunity to specialize according to his needs or wishes."

PROFESSOR G. W. UMPHREY,
University of Washington

These statements and those that appeared in the *Symposium* make clear that the basic needs of successful modern language teaching are threefold: (1) competent and enthusiastic teachers, (2) small classes, (3) sufficient time. With these three, all things are possible.

But competent and enthusiastic teachers, as a rule, can be had only by clothing their profession with dignity and by granting them adequate salaries. Small classes and sufficient time are strictly financial problems. In other words, good modern language instruction can be had if the public is willing to pay for it, and not otherwise. It is one of our tasks, therefore, to convince the public that the study of foreign languages is important.

There was a time, and not so long ago, when American imports and exports were bought and sold by foreign agents in our very harbors and shipped to and fro in foreign bottoms. The time has now come when the United States, as an industrial nation, must go out after the markets of the world. To do so we must have American agents who know the languages and customs of other peoples. This is an utilitarian argument, but it has great force.

Once we led a quiet and isolated life and were not especially interested in the great world movements that went on about us; but the war plunged us irrevocably into the midst of things and there we shall stay. To hold our own we must know our neighbors. The youthful period of blissful ignorance has gone forever, and the great mass of our people do not know it yet. We must teach them.

We are passing through troublous times. A thousand and one problems confront us and we do not know which way to turn. But other nations have been in troubled waters. Some passed through successfully and some were wrecked. Our people, for the most part, are serenely unaware of these facts, and we must do all that lies in our power to show them the moral and spiritual experiences of other nations.

In these ways and in a score of others we can be of real service to our country. When the great public comes to realize what we can do and are seeking to do, then and then only shall we have a sufficient number of competent teachers, small classes, and all the time we need to do our work well.

Indiana University